

REMARKS

Applicants have now had an opportunity to carefully consider the Examiner's comments set forth in the Office Action of August 1, 2006.

Reconsideration of the Application is requested.

The Office Action

Claims 1-16 remain in this application. Claim 16 has been withdrawn and is currently amended to depend from claim 1. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that rejoinder of claim 16 be permitted.

Claims 1, 5, 6, and 7 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Jackson, et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,634,636), in view of Judge (U.S. Patent No. 4,618,292).

Claims 2, 8-10, and 14 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Jörg (U.S. Patent No. 5,810,346) in view of Judge and further in view of Graushar (U.S. Patent No. 5,100,116) and Goldberg (U.S. Patent No. 6,735,332).

Claims 4, 11-13, and 15 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Jörg in view of Graushar and further in view of Jackson, et al.

For the reasons outlined below it is submitted that the claims are in condition for allowance.

Claim 3, against which no rejections have been made, has been placed in independent form. Accordingly, it is submitted that claim 3 is in condition for allowance.

Claim 1 recites an interface which includes a sheet transporting system. The sheet transporting system includes a plane having first and second angularly spaced sides. The sheet transporting system includes independently operable sheet transports and provides selectable sheet translation in the plane to selectably transport sheets from selected ones of said plural sheet input areas to selected ones of said plural sheet outputs areas so as to provide selectable sheet feeding from selected sheet input areas to selected sheet outputs areas. The sheet transports provide variable angle driving for selectable sheet rotation and translation of selected sheets in the plane whereby the sheets are selectably contemporaneously transportable in different directions towards the plural sheet outputs areas. A first of the sheet outputs areas is adjacent the first angularly spaced side and a second the sheet output areas is adjacent the second angularly spaced side.

The references of record do not disclose or suggest a system in which first and second sheet outputs areas are adjacent first and second angularly spaced sides of a plane in which the sheets are transported.

The conveyor system disclosed by Jackson includes an upper section and a lower section which are substantially coextensive (col. 3, lines 25-26). A flexible object (a sheet of paper) is moved along the conveyor system in one direction by air jets 26. The air jets allow correction of minor misalignments in paper position and orientation so as to make sure that the paper is maintained on the same desired path to the same destination. Any minor change from the desired path can result in distortion of an image. Jackson seeks simply to maintain movement of the sheet in the downstream direction, thus correcting for any minor rotation or orientation of the sheet. Thus, Jackson teaches away from directing paper sheets in two directions contemporaneously towards different output destinations. Further, there is no motivation in Jackson for providing an additional outlet along one of the sides of the conveyor system where there is nothing to receive the paper. The paper is simply transported from one device (a photoreceptor) to another (a fusing station). Nor is there any suggestion in Jackson that the minor corrections provided by the air jets to maintain the sheets all in the same direction could be used for contemporaneous sheet moving in different directions to different, angularly spaced output areas.

Judge discloses a semiconductor wafer orientor. The silicon wafers oriented in Judge's system are rigid objects, not flexible, like paper. A semiconductor wafer 12 is guided along a track by air jets 32 to avoid contact by solid objects. FIGURE 10 shows an embodiment in which a wafer is moved from one track section 52, stopped at an intersection with another track section 54, then moved along the track section 54. The Judge system moves one wafer at a time. There is no suggestion in Judge of contemporaneously transporting plural wafers in different directions toward plural outputs areas.

There is no motivation for combining Judge with Jackson. Neither reference provides any suggestion that a rigid wafer transporting system could be used for transporting flexible objects, such as paper, contemporaneously in different directions toward plural outputs areas adjacent angularly spaced sides of a plane.

Moreover, combining Judge with Jackson would not arrive at the present invention, even if the combination were to be made. Judge would convey a sheet along a first track to an intersection, stop the sheet, then move the sheet in a second direction on a second track. There would be no contemporaneous transport of sheets to angularly spaced output directions.

The Examiner argues that it would be obvious to employ a plane with output areas for the purpose of replacing an input station with an output station and vice versa. However, this would destroy the invention of Jackson. Replacing the photoreceptor with the fuser would result in the paper being fused before the image was applied.

Accordingly, it is submitted that claim 1 and claims 5-7 and 16 dependent therefrom distinguish over the references of record.

Claim 8 recites a system which includes a plurality of printers and a plurality of sheet input areas which receive printed sheets from the plurality of printers, each of the printers feeding printed sheets to a respective one of the sheet input areas. A sheet transporting system provides selectable sheet translation to selectably transport sheets from selected ones of the plural sheet input areas to selected ones of said plural sheet outputs areas so as to provide selectable sheet feeding from selected printers to selected sheet processing systems. First and second of the sheet input areas are positioned relative to first and second of the sheet outputs areas such that a path of a sheet transported between the first input area and the first outputs area crosses a path of a sheet transported between the second input area and the second outputs area.

The Examiner now recites a four-way combination against claim 8, combining Jörg, Judge, Graushar, and Goldberg.

Jörg does not disclose or fairly suggest a multifunction printed sheets interface system in which a plurality of printers feed printed sheets to a plurality of sheet input areas which receive printed sheets from the plurality of printers. In Jörg, the cutters are provided with rolls of paper. There is no suggestion of printers feeding sheets to input areas.

Graushar discloses a collating and binding system in which preprinted blanks 16 ("signatures") are fed by a feeder 14 onto a conveyor 18. The signatures travel through one or more printing stations 22 where customized printing is performed. There is no

suggestion in Graushar that the printing stations 22 feed printed sheets to a plurality of sheet input areas which receive printed sheets from the plurality of printers. Rather, the printing stations 22 are all together, in the same conveyor line. The printers do not feed printed sheets to the conveyor, but merely print the sheets traveling on the conveyor.

Further, there is no suggestion in Graushar that a plurality of printers feed printed sheets to a respective one of a plurality of sheet input areas of Graushar's conveyor system. The Examiner points to col. 5, lines 25-28, 40-43 as disclosing "printing sheets on a plurality of printers." However, these sections refer to only printing the cover of an assembled book. Further, there is no suggestion in Graushar as to how the cover printing stations could each feed sheets to a respective sheet input area.

Further none of the references suggests a multiple sheets interface system where the paths of sheets cross on the interface.

The Examiner adds Judge to this combination, but provides no reasoning for the combination other than a reference to paragraph 4. This paragraph refers to the combination of Jackson with Judge. The Examiner has thus failed to establish a prima facie case for the combination of Jörg with Judge.

Applicants submit that there is no basis for such a combination. There is no suggestion in either reference that the rigid object transport system of Judge, which is used for moving a single wafer between tracks, could be used to transport paper from the cutters of Jörg. The air jets would be expected to blow the sheets all over the conveyor system of Jörg.

Nor is there any suggestion as to how the air jets of Judge could be used to transport the assembled books with spines and covers which are presumably much heavier than the silicon wafers of Judge, between the printing stations of Graushar identified by the Examiner.

The Examiner further adds Goldberg to the combination. Applicants submit that Goldberg is not properly a reference against the claims. Subject matter developed by another person, which qualifies as prior art only under one or more of subsections (e), (f), and (g) of Section 102, shall not preclude patentability under this section where the subject matter and the claimed invention were, at the time the claimed invention was made, owned

by the same person or subject to an obligation of assignment to the same person. MPEP §103(c)(1). Goldberg issued on May 11, 2004, after the filing date of the present application and thus could only be raised under §103(a) on the basis of §102(e), (f), or (g). Goldberg was, at the time the present application was filed, assigned to Xerox Corporation (Reel/Frame 010727/0676, recorded March 30, 2000). The present application was also assigned to Xerox Corporation (Reel/Frame 015019/0562, recorded February 24, 2004). Applicants respectfully request that the Goldberg reference be withdrawn.

Accordingly, it is submitted that claim 8 and dependent claims 2, 4, and 9-13 dependent therefrom are not properly rejected over the references of record.

Claim 14 recites a method including printing sheets on a plurality of printers, feeding the printed sheets from the plurality of printers to a plurality of respective spaced input areas of a printed sheets interface system, transporting the printed sheets from the input areas to selected ones of a plurality of spaced outputs areas of the printed sheets interface system with a plurality of sheet transports, and sensing a position of the printed sheets during transporting. A sheet transported between first input and outputs areas crosses the path of a sheet transported between second input and outputs areas.

Jörg does not disclose such a method. In Jörg, sheets are transported from cutters 114. There is no suggestion or motivation in Jörg for conveying sheets from selected ones of a plurality of printers to selected ones of a plurality of outputs areas. There is no motivation for combining Graushar with Jörg. Graushar teaches a system in which every sheet travels past the printer. There is no suggestion of feeding printed sheets from plural printers to a plurality of respective spaced input areas or of sheets crossing in their paths.

As noted above, the Examiner has failed to provide a prima facie case for the combination of Judge with Jörg. Further, applicants respectfully request that Goldberg be removed as a reference for the reasons noted above.

Accordingly, it is submitted that claims 14 and 15 are not properly rejected over the references of record.

CONCLUSION

For the reasons detailed above, it is submitted all claims remaining in the application (Claims 1-16) are now in condition for allowance. The foregoing comments do not require unnecessary additional search or examination.

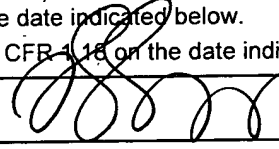
In the event the Examiner considers personal contact advantageous to the disposition of this case, he is hereby authorized to call the undersigned at Telephone Number (216) 861-5582.

Respectfully submitted,

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August 22, 2006
Date

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